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A HAPPY AUGURY OF PEACE.

BY WAYNE MAC VEAGH.

As the habit of looking on the bright side of things is in itself a virtue of no mean order, it ought, like all other virtues, to be cultivated even under adverse conditions, and when the conditions are very favorable cheerfulness ought to pass into thanksgiving. Such, it seems to me, is the state of mind in which all who long for, and strive after, the practical realization, as soon as possible, of "peace on earth and good-will to men" as a substitute for war on earth and ill-will to men should welcome the treaty just concluded between Great Britain and France, notwithstanding the outbreak of the war between Japan and Russia.

Several of the leading nations of Europe have recently entered into treaties with each other providing for the arbitration of such controversies as might thereafter arise between them and which could not be amicably settled, agreeing in some cases to refer them to the decision of the Hague Tribunal. Such a treaty was signed last October between Great Britain and France, but it is now followed by a treaty settling, upon just and honorable bases, all disputed questions at present existing, which might otherwise, from time to time, not only lead to war between them, but otherwise endanger the peace of Europe.

While fully recognizing the great service to humanity thus rendered, it should never be forgotten that the Emperor of Russia led the way in this good work, by his appeal to the nations to lessen as far as possible the terrible evils of war. He did not call it hell, in the apt and picturesque phrase of General Sherman, but he did use these noble words:

"The maintenance of general peace and a sensible reduction of the excessive armaments which weigh upon all nations present themselves in the existing condition of the whole world as the

ideal towards which the endeavors of all governments should be directed. . . . This Conference will be, by the help of God, a happy presage for the century now about to open. It will unite and thus greatly strengthen the efforts of all those states which are sincerely seeking to make the great conception of universal peace triumph over the elements of trouble and discord. It will at the same time cement them together by a general consecration of the principles of equity and right, on which rest the security of states and the welfare of peoples."

That lofty, ethical appeal was not unheeded, and although the law of force had always theretofore reigned supreme, it became at once a subject of practical discussion by responsible sovereigns, statesmen and diplomatists whether the principles of justice and right might not take its place; and a representative of the Emperor at the Conference thus called declared that "the name of Peace Conference, which the instincts of the people, anticipating a decision on this point by the governments, have given to our assemblage, indicated accurately the essential object of our labors. The Peace Conference must not fail in the mission which devolves upon it. It must offer a result of its deliberations which shall be tangible and upon which all humanity waits with confidence. We shall also undertake in a special manner to generalize and codify the practice of good offices, of mediation, and of arbitration. These ideas constitute, so to speak, the very essence of our task. . . . Without doubt rivalries exist. . . . Such rivalry may do good, provided that above it all there shall remain the idea of justice and the lofty sentiment of human brotherhood. . . . *The nations have a great need of peace.*"

The Conference itself in constituting the Hague Tribunal was actuated by the same beneficent purpose. When doing so, the assembled representatives of twenty-six nations declared that such a tribunal would be "a mighty power making for the cause of right and justice throughout the world, and that it would incessantly remind the spirit of all peoples, by a conspicuous and respected sign, of the superior ideas of right and humanity, while it would be a mighty instrument towards the solemn establishment of the sentiment of justice in the world, for the good of all peoples and for the progress of humanity."

Next to the Emperor of Russia the credit for the present movement in Europe to discourage war and to encourage peace

undoubtedly belongs to the King of Great Britain. Ever since his accession his labors have been incessant in this good cause. He began his reign by seeking to bring the war in the Transvaal to a close, and he has ever since been visiting the capitals of other nations as a genuine missionary of peace, so that the statement officially published does him no more than justice in asserting that the amicable treaty of friendship just signed with France is due in a large measure to his "powerful influence."

As one grows older one ought to grow wiser, for as one gets into years the years ought to bring with them a better sense of proportion and a truer judgment of truth and error, in comparative politics, as well as in other matters. Whether that is so or not, it is very certain that time only increases in Americans their faith in a "government of the people, by the people and for the people," but that unalterable conviction makes it the more desirable that we should give full credit alike to the Emperor and to the King for their unselfish efforts to make "the great idea of general peace triumph over the elements of trouble and discord," for such an idea is in perfect harmony with our history and our institutions.

Anticipating their advocacy of peace, General Grant as long ago as 1879 wrote these modest but significant words:

"Although educated and brought up as a soldier and probably having been in as many battles as any one, certainly as many as most people could have been, yet there never was a time nor a day when it was not my desire that some just and fair way should be established for settling difficulties, instead of bringing innocent persons into conflict and thus withdrawing from productive labor able-bodied men who in a large majority of cases have no particular interest in the subject for which they are contending."

The purport of these words is, it will be observed, very similar to the purport of the words used by the Emperor of Russia more than twenty years afterwards in asking the nations to assemble in a peace conference at The Hague.

The impressive words recently spoken by Senator Fairbanks of Indiana on this subject deserve also to be quoted: "The questions recur as often as we witness the devastating effects of international strife, cannot the wit of man devise some agency whereby to avert it in whole or in good part? Cannot men reason and solve grave questions in the deliberative chamber as well as upon

the battle-field? Cannot men successfully discuss questions of international significance in the serene tribunals of peace as well as upon the decks of men-of-war, with the air filled with the missiles of death and destruction?

"The arbitral tribunal affords a ready, fair and honorable way of determining most of the disputes which arise between nations. It will not be efficacious in all cases, but that it is capable of settling many and serious problems there can be no possible doubt. This agency may be invoked without the loss of national dignity or national self-respect in adjusting a vast range of international differences.

"The strongest nations can well lead the way in promoting the principle of international arbitration. Their motives will not be questioned and their example will have a far-reaching and beneficent influence. The principle is essentially sound. It should receive, as it is receiving, the utmost consideration at the hands of statesmen and students of public questions, to the end that it may become an acknowledged, permanent international policy. It makes for peace. It will become an effective agency to avert war."

The especial reason why the friends of peace are entitled to exult over the signing of the Anglo-French Treaty, as over a great victory achieved for their cause, is admirably stated by Lord Lansdowne in expressing the hope that those two countries "in basing the composition of their long-standing differences upon mutual concessions may afford a precedent which will contribute something to the maintenance of international good-will and the preservation of general peace." The statesmen and diplomats, on both sides of the British Channel, who have assisted in accomplishing this happy consummation of a treaty of friendship which is to take the place of the hostility of centuries should be the objects of our gratitude as well as of our congratulations, for the peaceful issue of their labors is likely to confer immeasurable blessings not only upon their own countries, but by the influence of this treaty, as well as by its example, upon all the nations of the earth. Such a transaction, so free from all base alloy, should not only renew the courage of the advocates of peace, but also strengthen their hope that the dawning of a better day is not so distant as it sometimes seems.

Optimism, like most other things, is of two kinds, the false and

the true. That is a false optimism which insists upon calling black white and evil good, and seeks compensation from the persons and the parties which happen to have at their disposal favors to dispense, for pretending that whatever they do is right and wise, however wrong and unwise it may be. That is a true optimism which sees clearly and states distinctly that black is black and things evil are things evil, but which believes and declares that the present decade will probably witness the perpetration of fewer inexcusable wrongs than the decade which preceded it, and that the decade which follows will probably present a still fairer record in that respect, for the simple reason that the world grows better and not worse with "the process of the suns."

It is, however, idle to deny that the possession of great military or naval strength continues to be, as it always has been, a dangerous temptation to use it for the wicked purpose of conquering or dismembering some country too weak to offer successful resistance. For more than thirty years no great Power had ventured to assail any other great Power, but almost every one of them had been guilty of acts of spoliation against small Powers who were unable to defend themselves—such aggressions are so utterly wanting in every element of true courage that it is not easy even to allude to them in good temper, and unhappily, our own government is no longer entitled to criticise other nations for despoiling their weaker neighbors by the abuse of the superior force they happen to possess.

Certainly such wanton and wicked aggressions if standing alone would justify very gloomy apprehensions of the future, but happily they do not stand alone. Over against them is to be set the fact that every one of these occurrences has encountered severe criticism and reprobation from great numbers of people in the different countries supposed to be commercially benefited by the wrongs committed in their name. There is also the cheering consideration that there is a constant pressure of an ever-increasing weight of public opinion in all countries where such opinion exists, that unnecessary and aggressive war is a great and terrible evil, and a growing discontent with the spoliation and dismemberment of weak nations by force, no matter under what specious pretence it is accomplished, as well as the belief that such action is a crime with which history is sure to deal in no measured terms. The best, however, of all reasons for hopeful-

ness, in the face of such wrongdoing, is to be found in the encouraging consideration that the violations of international law and of international justice must constantly grow less and less, alike in number and in atrocity. At the same time we all know that the moral law makes its way but slowly in the relations alike of individuals and of nations, nor must we expect the age of miracles to return even in so good a cause as that of the world's peace.

After the intimation given in the pages of this REVIEW last December there ought not to have been any surprise that the decision of the Hague Tribunal was in favor of the Powers who engaged in war against Venezuela. Indeed, arbitrators, all of whom happened to be subjects of great European monarchies, could hardly be expected to deal harshly with other great European monarchies for imposing their will by war upon a weak and distant South-American republic, nor ought they to be greatly blamed, in view of their training and environment, for their inability to see that the only important question for the Hague Tribunal, the ethical question, was the one they declined to decide. By confining themselves to what seems to be an unreasonable construction of the words used on behalf of Venezuela to secure the ending of the war, they evaded the duty of deciding whether the war itself was or was not justifiable upon the principles enunciated by the Peace Conference which created the Tribunal upon which they were sitting. There can, however, be no manner of doubt that they acted according to the best light they had, nor can there be any doubt that the presence for the first time of so many great nations at the bar of the Tribunal outweighs in usefulness any adverse result of the decision itself.

If, as reported, M. Mouravieff is trying to persuade the Emperor of Russia that a Peace Tribunal should treat as what he calls "politics" and ignore as irrelevant all arguments in favor of peace, he certainly deserves the sympathy of all kindly disposed persons. In calling the arguments against unnecessary war "politics" he shows himself unacquainted with the broad distinction between "politics" and "ethics," a distinction which has been tolerably familiar at least since Aristotle—and possibly his failure to recognize that distinction accounts for his otherwise unaccountable confusion of ideas on the subject.

In spite, however, of all the hostile influences which have been

mentioned, the friends of peace possess ample grounds for thanksgiving in the present condition and the future prospects of the cause, whose triumph seems to them so necessary to the true progress and welfare of mankind; and while the war between Japan and Russia is a source of profound sorrow the result of it may not prove an unmixed evil. We are far too ignorant of the facts essential to a just judgment to attempt to fix the blame for the resort to arms, but even at this early stage of the struggle it seems probable that at its close both combatants will have suffered great losses without compensating gains to either. Certainly, no previous war ever evoked so little public interest, the general feeling being only one of regret that a war is being waged without any apparent necessity for it.

Such a condition of public opinion certainly indicates that it is changing its attitude towards war in general, and no person could have attended the conference held in Washington last January without being impressed with the immense advance the cause of international arbitration, which is only another name for the cause of international peace, has recently made in this country. The attendance upon the conference was fully representative, as well in numbers as in character, of the most influential elements in American citizenship in every section of the country, while letters were received from over four hundred persons sympathizing with the object of the conference, but who were unable to attend it in person. The commercial organizations of more than twenty of our great cities, from the point of view of men engaged in transacting the world's business, have given their valuable support to the movement, while all the influential leaders of organized labor continue, as they have always been, ardent advocates of it.

Indeed, in every civilized country throughout the world this good cause is constantly growing in strength, for each country is daily becoming more weary of the heavy burdens—"and grievous to be borne"—which are imposed upon productive industry to meet the ever-augmenting expenditures for great military or great naval armaments.

"The International Parliamentary Union for the Promotion of Arbitration" now includes in its membership the names of leading members of every parliamentary body in Europe, and when it assembles at St. Louis during the present year it will

also represent the leading parliamentary bodies in America, and the results of its deliberations, therefore, cannot fail to be fruitful of great good. And the same is true of the International Peace Congress which meets in Boston next October.

For all the reasons which have been stated the friends of peace are to-day entitled to be more cheerful and to feel more hopeful than ever before, for all the signs point to the substitution, far sooner than was expected, of amity between nations in place of hostility, and it ought not to cause surprise if the treaty just signed between France and England leads to a like treaty at an early day between England and Russia,—and if so, other similar treaties will inevitably follow, conferring similar blessings.

Meanwhile, it is our duty to see that our own country does not fall behind in this beneficent movement. Our proper place is at the head of it, and we must not be so intent on swelling our military and naval expenditures and boasting of ourselves as “a world Power”—as if we had ever been anything else since the Declaration of Independence—as to endanger our leadership of the nations in the cause of peace, for it is the growing strength of that cause of which the Anglo-French treaty is such a happy augury.

WAYNE MAC VEAGH.